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Most UK universities have a Chancellor and the role they play in the service of the institution can often be inferred from the background credentials of those appointed. Some universities go for Royalty, as did Cambridge until the late Duke of Edinburgh stepped down, but this Oxford has eschewed. A surprising number of universities appear to select – by varying means – high-profile names without obvious prior involvements with higher education. Occasionally one Chancellor is shared between more than one institution. A few universities dispense with the role and the Vice-Chancellor takes on the additional duties otherwise carried out by a Chancellor. Terms of office vary widely. In Oxford Chancellors have up to now been appointed for life but Lord Patten chose to resign after 21 years.

If one surveys Oxford Chancellors over the last century they have been politicians throughout, usually Tories and Peers. They have included one serving Prime Minister (Harold MacMillan) and an ex-President of the European Commission (Roy Jenkins). Chris Patten was Governor of Hong Kong. Status is clearly an asset. As Chris Patten has demonstrated, the duties are in part ceremonial, as in presiding on Honorary Degree Day, but he has chaired – and by all accounts led – the Committee which in effect selected our four most recent Vice-Chancellors, given that only one name was forwarded to Congregation for election. Perhaps even more importantly he has often spoken out unflinchingly on policy issues, such as free speech, and one assumes operated powerfully behind the scenes in the corridors of power. In other words he has represented Oxford to the outside world – prominently, proactively and with effect. However, much has changed since the start of Lord Patten's Chancellorship. Our outward

THE CHANCELLORSHIP

facing reputation is ever more important but increasingly in the glare of media attention.

The University announced its criteria for the new appointment in the following terms:

“The Chancellor is the ceremonial head of the University of Oxford. While this key role has no executive responsibilities, it is more than symbolic;

the Chancellor provides supportive and useful advice and guidance to the University, particularly to the Vice-Chancellor. The Chancellor presides at events such as Encaenia and at the Chancellor's Court of Benefactors and is sometimes expected to take a leading role at other official events. The Chancellor is the Visitor (an external figure of authority on whom the college can call for advice and for arbitration if insoluble dispute arises amongst its governing body) of five colleges and also chairs the Committee for the Nomination of the Vice-Chancellor. The Chancellor must be readily accessible and available throughout the year. This is an unremunerated position, but all role-related travel and expenses will be covered.

The Chancellor is elected by Convocation, a body made up of all former students of the University who have been admitted to a degree (other than an honorary degree), members of Congregation, and retired staff who were members of Congregation at retirement.

The University is seeking candidates who can demonstrate:

outstanding achievements in their field and the ability to command respect beyond it;

a deep appreciation for the University's research and academic mission, its global community, and its ambition to remain a world class research and teaching university;

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...and much more

the ability and willingness to enhance the reputation of the University locally, nationally and abroad.

Applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds are warmly welcomed."

* * *

The process of electing our new Chancellor got off to a bad start. The national press leapt on the suddenly announced plan to form an entirely novel committee to vet the names of acceptable candidates. Inevitably, conspiracy theories abounded. As *Oxford Magazine* reported (No 464, 0th Week, TT 2024), the membership of the committee and the vetting criteria to be employed by the committee were controversial and they were soon modified after informal and semi-confidential discussions between members of Congregation and the Registrar and Vice-Chancellor. One criterion for exclusion was initially "elected politicians" and it was also proposed that "equality and diversity" considerations should be applied. A 10-year limitation in the term of office remains – which may conceivably affect the attractions of the post for some potential candidates. But other decisions arrived at by Council without any prior notice or open consultation may have even more far-reaching consequences that we have yet to appreciate.

Firstly, it was decided that the voting should be online. This meant that, in place of the traditional – and, especially where college hospitality was laid on, much appreciated – ceremonial of travelling to Oxford in person to hand in voting papers, the eligible 250,000 members of Convocation now had to register in advance and attendance would no longer be required. The closing date for registration was 18th August. It has been suggested that this new procedure and timing cuts out many Convocation members and that Congregation members may well dominate nu-

merically in the election. In so far as all the traditions of in-person voting have gone, the risk is that Convocation will be seen to have lost much of one of its two surviving functions. The second, the election of the Professor of Poetry, has also devolved increasingly to Congregation. Clearly this is not good for alumni relations.

Secondly, even now we do not know the names of the acceptable candidates and we have to rely on the media for clues. Applications closed on September 4th and candidates could nominate themselves (previously the support of 50 Convocation members was required). It has been rumoured that there have been up to fifty expressions of interest, including several recently demitted Chancellors of other universities. A number of those named are in the Lords. At least three women are among those listed. The vetting committee, due to meet last week, as of the start of 0th week has not announced the candidate list. This leaves little time indeed for campaigning and detailed considerations of the suitability of the candidates on offer. The University has promised candidate statements, hopefully covering their qualifications and how they would see their responsibilities in the post. There is provision for a second call for candidates.

It seems likely that our new Chancellor may be chosen on grounds somewhat different from those in the past. Will matters perhaps revolve around a choice between Labour versus Tory candidates or will changing public attitudes to the political class in general affect preferences? Will female be preferred to male? A deciding factor could be university reform; more than one publicly-announced candidate has been vocal in the current urgent national debates concerning future funding of HE. And will any of the candidates fulfil the overriding and impossible-to-define matter of stature in the public eye?

T.J.H

How to initiate Congregation actions

How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation

It is open to any 20 or more members of Congregation to propose a resolution or topic for discussion at a meeting of Congregation; requests must be made in writing to the Registrar not later than noon on the 22nd day before the relevant meeting. Any 2 or more members of Congregation can submit an amendment to, or announce an intention to vote against, a resolution or a legislative proposal (*i.e.* a proposal to amend the statutes). Notice must be given to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 8th day before the meeting.

Questions and replies

Any 2 or more members of Congregation may ask a question in Congregation about any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University. Requests must be submitted to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 18th day before the Congregation meeting at which it is to be asked. The question and the reply (drafted by Council) will be published in *Gazette* in the week prior to the relevant meeting. The answer is also formally read out at the meeting. Supplementary questions are allowed.

Postal votes

Attendance at meetings of Congregation tends to be low. Postal voting can potentially allow opinion to be easily accessed more widely across Congregation membership. Congregation can trigger a postal vote after a debate (but not after a discussion or a question and reply where no vote is taken). 25 or more members of Congregation have to be present ("on the floor") at the relevant debate. The request must be made by 4pm on the 6th day after the debate, signed by 50 members of Congregation, in writing to the Registrar. Council can also decide to hold a postal ballot, by the same deadline.

Flysheets

To generate a flysheet for publication with the *Gazette*, the camera-ready copy (2 sides maximum) should be submitted with at least 10 signatures on an indemnity form (obtainable from the Registrar) by 10am on the Monday in the week in which publication is desired.

Regulations governing the conduct of business in Congregation can be found at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/529-122.shtml>
Items placed on the agenda for Congregation are published in the *Gazette*.
The Congregation website is at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation.
Advice on Congregation procedures is available from the Council Secretariat on request (email: congregation.meeting@admin.ox.ac.uk).

The Vice-Chancellor's Student Colloquia on the Climate Emergency

In her Oration on first assuming office the Vice-Chancellor outlined several immediate plans of action one of which was a novel cross-disciplinary opportunity for students to learn about and discuss an important area of global concern. The Climate Emergency was the obvious choice. Tom Crawford with input from Bill Finnegan kindly agreed to answer questions from Oxford Magazine on the outcome of the first year's experience, ahead of its second run – T.J.H.

I gather that the Vice-Chancellor's Colloquium was a great success. This initiative strikes me as admirably ambitious. What aspect of what it set out to do do you, regard as its most successful outcome?

Seeing the level of engagement and excitement amongst the students during the lectures was something very special. It was clear from the outset that students were really interested in climate science and wanted to learn as much as possible about the problem. You could really feel the energy in the lecture theatre each week, which was amazing to experience, and gave me confidence that the next generation can help us to fix the climate crisis.

The inevitable follow-up question; what feature of the program do you regard as needing change in next years' announced repeat exercise?

I think the main difficulty we had with the programme was the limited time available to really debate the topics raised in the lectures. We allowed as much time as possible for questions and discussion (30 minutes per lecture), but from the level of engagement it was clear students wanted to continue to discuss the issues further. For the next iteration we are hoping to introduce additional debate-style sessions amongst students to allow the discussions to continue.

What lessons did you learn from feedback or comments from the student participants, with whom you must have interacted regularly and closely, in your role on behalf of the Department of Continuing Education, the department primarily responsible for planning and coordinating this entirely new initiative (one of a small number of new projects announced by the V-C in her Oration on taking office and carried forward by Martin Williams, P-V-C Education)?

Similar to above, the students generally wanted more time to be allocated for further discussion of the issues presented in the lectures. I think we were perhaps over-ambitious in terms of wanting to cover such a wide range of topics around climate change, and as such it sometimes felt a little rushed when traversing between topics.

How many students applied for the Colloquium; were they all undergraduates; were they evenly balanced between sciences and humanities?

We received over 450 applications from undergraduates – 44% were from STEM subjects, and 56% social sciences and humanities. The 200 spaces in the Colloquium were randomly allocated to ensure half of the students came from social sciences and humanities, and half came from STEM subjects, while also representing all undergraduate colleges and degrees.

Was it difficult to get lecturers and postdocs to provide the teaching; was the right balance in expertise between science and humanities in any way difficult to achieve?

The lecturers were identified by the core team as part of the planning process, as we sought to provide a balanced representation across all divisions, disciplines, and backgrounds. The graduate tutors that led the skills sessions were selected through a competitive application process, and as with the colloquium itself, there was a lot more interest than spaces available!

How were the college-based, post-doc-led, small group discussion and project-planning meetings coordinated in terms of fulfilling your hopes for them; were the post-docs given guidance sessions or crib-sheets of any kind, for example?

Several training sessions were provided for the skills session leaders, where myself, Bill Finnegan and Alice Evatt would present the teaching materials we had created and provide guidance to the tutors on how best to present the content. The tutors were provided with the original slides – which they were encouraged to modify to their own teaching style – as well as teaching notes and model solutions where relevant.

In terms of outcome there were no essays or examinations; there were however "self-assessments", accreditation and competition between the college-based groups for a prize based on their projects; did all groups participate equally well and did everybody achieve accreditation; did some students drop out and if so do we know why?

Of the 200 students that accepted a place on the programme, 144 of them completed the weekly self-assessments and attended at least 75% of the sessions to qualify for the digital certification. We are still collating the data from the student feedback questionnaire, but I believe the most common reason for dropping out was due to not having enough free time to attend the lectures and classes.

In terms of the final project, each of the 10 college groups selected a team to represent them in the final showcase. The 'winning team' was selected by the students themselves, with everyone present in the session able to vote for their favourite project. The 10 finalists then presented to the core team, and we selected our 3 favourites to move forwards to the celebration event.

With a subject like climate change which is highly technical and almost entirely science-based there must have been unequal challenges for humanities students compared to science students; since a primary objective of the Colloquium was to bridge this divide do you have any observations or comments to make on how well this was achieved?

I think this actually worked even better than anticipated due to the quality of the lectures delivered by our speakers based in the humanities. By having two lecturers per session – one from the sciences and the other from the humanities – we were able to bridge the gap between the two disciplines, and present the students in the audience with at least one alternative approach to the topic that they were likely to be unfamiliar with.

As an explicit example, in the first lecture on the causes of climate change, Helen Johnson presented the scientific approach, explaining greenhouse gases and the warming effects of increased CO₂ emissions, whilst Amanda Power discussed the historical aspect of the problem, which focused on the use of animals and humans as a resource before fossil fuels, and how development of natural resources has always been seen as a sign of progress.

Are you aware of students changing their views on climate change during the course; have any become activists as a result?

The overwhelming feedback from students was one of greater knowledge and understanding of the complexities

of the issue, as well as ideas around what we as a society need to do if we are to prevent further damage to our climate. I think the students were relatively self-selective in terms of those that already had an interest in climate science were much more likely to apply to the programme, but based on the feedback during the celebration event, it was clear that there is an improved sense of hope for the future, and a greater sense of community amongst the students as a result of being able to learn and interact with like-minded individuals.

Could and/or should such a program be opened up to all comers in future or even made mandatory; could a version of the Colloquium be modified to meet such an ambition?

There is a plan to scale the programme up as much as is feasibly possible, but with an awareness of the restrictions on both staff and students time during term. One idea we are exploring at the moment, is to offer an online version of the Colloquium which could be taken at the students own pace. However, given that one of the greatest successes of the pilot came from the relationships that developed between students interacting in-person during the lectures and skills sessions and the impromptu discussions that followed, we are still trying to working out the best way to generate a similar sense of community in an online setting.

For further information:

<https://ox.ac.uk/vc-colloquium>

<https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/article/the-vice-chancellors-colloquium-on-climate>

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2024-04-24-vice-chancellors-innovative-cross-curricular-programme-celebrated>

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What we can learn from Campus Protests: preparing for the Fall Term

ROBERT A. SCOTT

The Hamas attack on Israel and Israel's response in Gaza prompted demonstrations at over 500 colleges and universities in the U.S., including encampments on more than 130 American campuses. More than 2,000 people were arrested ('Crowd Counting Consortium: An Empirical Overview of Recent Pro-Palestine Protests at U.S. Schools,' Harvard Kennedy School Ash Center, May 30, 2024). Allegations of violence were greatly overstated, and often took place away from, not on, a campus. Many demonstrators were from off-campus. Most protests were peaceful.

Several university presidents at elite institutions lost their jobs due to political and donor criticisms of their leadership in the face of alleged anti-Semitism and conflict over how to handle pro-Peace and pro-Palestine protests. Centuries of anti-Jewish animus went from backdrop to front page quicker than colleges could manage.

Having served for 30 years as president of two institutions, one public and one private, my teams and I experienced numerous incidents of student protest. These included sit-ins blocking passages, rallies in reaction to police killings of Black youth, and challenges to investment policies regarding fossil fuels, among others. After each incident on our campus, or major disruptions at other campuses, my team and I would discuss what we could learn from the protest, how we could have handled the situation better, and what changes, if any, to policies and protocols we needed to make.

This is the time of year when the vice presidents, deans, and I, with some others, would meet off-campus in 'retreat' mode (we called them 'advances') to discuss the successes and failures of the past year and plans for the coming year. At times we would bring in experts on various topics, including demographics and communications.

For this fall, the topics should certainly be designed to help the campus cope with student demands, as we know them, including the war in Gaza, investments in the Middle East, and Defence Department sponsorship of university research. The agenda should not only include briefings on the history of the Middle East, preferably by a faculty member, as well as investment policies and allocations, but also policies regarding freedom of speech and academic freedom. Tabletop exercises and role-playing can be effective tools for vetting potential policies and protocols. The risk assessment matrix must be brought up-to-date, as reputation risk rises in priority.

This fall will become even more complicated and conflicted as the presidential election heats up and state and local legislatures borrow from the Congressional Hearings play book.

Some of the lessons learned this spring include the obvious: these are our students. Our responsibility is to

engage them and teach them, not ignore or berate them. Yes, they need to know that actions have consequences and that time, place, and manner policies about protest must be honoured. But their demands provide teachable moments.

This relates to another lesson learned: involve the faculty early. In some cases, it seems that the administration called in police before engaging the faculty in planning a response even though the faculty are closest to the students. Some faculty even joined protests because of administrative actions.

Better yet, involve the faculty in planning programs on the conflicts starting early in the fall. This is an opportunity to foster readings, discussions, and debates on the topics of world peace and interdependence. A book such as 'The Bill of Obligations: The Ten Habits of Good Citizens' by Richard Haass (New York: Penguin Random House, 2023) provides lessons for engagement on issues of misinformation and protest. In our country, schools and colleges are obligated to discuss and celebrate annually the Constitution in September, the 17th this year. And then there is World Peace Day held on Sept. 21, International Day of Non-Violence held on Oct. 2, and World Refugee Day on June 20, all sponsored by the United Nations.

Still another lesson learned is that communication matters; if you don't take the lead, someone else will and they probably don't have your best interests as a priority. Silence becomes a vacuum that will be filled.

Finally, leadership and leverage count. Leaders must be visible and use the leverage of relationships with trustees, alumni, neighbours, elected officials, and especially faculty, including public safety, and other students to seek advice and communicate to the community at large and the protesters. Listen to the students and engage them in dialogue. Distinguish between students and those from outside the campus. Consultants can be especially helpful. Calling the police should be a last resort, not a first response.

High on the list of topics for communication are the principles of free speech and academic freedom. A college or university should be a place to explore ideas, where every voice is heard, and voices are not controlled. Free speech is to be freely given even if some find it hateful. Unfortunately, this ideal seems honoured in the breach as we see university and school leaders forced from their posts by those who take offense at speech they find repugnant.

Another important principle is academic freedom, the freedom for academic experts to decide what to teach and how to teach without interference. However, in fraught times, we find interference from trustees and elected officials who put a higher priority on caution than on critical

thinking. Academic freedom means that students may learn without interference from those on campus or off.

A principle that is often ignored is that the faculty are partners in campus governance. They are stewards of academic quality in fulfilment of the institution's charter and mission. They are experts who can be called upon for lectures, seminars, and teach-ins to discuss the issues central to protests. Some campuses select a book that all are encouraged to read and discuss in campus round tables.

Finally, integrity and consistency in communications are essential. The campus and external community must have faith in the truth of what is said. A truism about communication is that compromise is not a dirty word. One

can compromise on position without compromising on principle. After all, opposing views can still hold truths.

In preparation for the fall, campus leaders must prepare to maximize response time to incidents and minimize confusion by having clear lines of communication. They must identify key stakeholders and meet with them often. They must ensure that institutional values and priorities are known and that policies will be applied consistently. In this way, we can protect our principles by reflecting on the lessons learned.

This article was originally published in HigherEdJobs, August 14, 2024.

The following are the recently issued guidelines for Oxford University students involved in protests – eds

A demonstration or protest will fall within the University's procedures for meetings and events (as set out in section 6 of the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech). As such organizers must contact the Proctors Office in advance, following the procedure set out in the Code, and a risk assessment will be required. The Proctors have a duty to facilitate protests and will work with organisers to ensure that protests can take place but do not violate the University Statutes and hence result in disciplinary procedures. The Proctors can be contacted through deputy.marshall@proctors.ox.ac.uk.

University members participating in protests are required to identify themselves to University officials when requested to do so. Failure to do so is a breach of Statute XI which all students with a contract to study at Oxford must abide by.

Students will face disciplinary investigation if the University Statutes are breached. The following extract from Statute XI are examples of clauses in the Statutes which are relevant to protests:

- No member of the University shall in a university context intentionally or recklessly:
 - (a) disrupt or attempt to disrupt teaching or study or research or the administrative, sporting, social, cultural, or other activities of the University;
 - (b) disrupt or attempt to disrupt the lawful exercise of freedom of speech by members, student members, and employees of the University or by visiting speakers;
 - (c) obstruct or attempt to obstruct any officer, employee, or agent of the University in the performance of his or her duties;
 - (d) deface, damage, or destroy or attempt to deface, damage or destroy any property of the University or any college or any other individual or knowingly misappropriate such property;
 - (e) occupy or use or attempt to occupy or use any property or facilities of the University or of any college except as may be expressly or impliedly authorised by the university or college authorities concerned;
 - (g) engage in action which is likely to cause injury or to impair safety;
 - (h) engage in violent, indecent, disorderly, threatening, or offensive behaviour or language;
 - (j) disobey a reasonable instruction given within their authority by one of the Proctors or their deputies;
 - (k) refuse to disclose his or her name and other relevant details to an officer or an employee or agent of the University or of any college in circumstances where it is reasonable to require that that information be given;

The Employment Problem in Cambridge: is a resolution in sight?

G.R.EVANS

Cambridge University finds itself in some confusion over the terms and conditions of employment of its academic and academic-related staff. In Cambridge an ‘unestablished’ post is fixed-term and disappears with the resignation or retirement of its holder, or the end of funding from an external grant. An ‘established’ post continues to exist to be refilled when it is vacated, with the burden on the University to fund the salary continuing.¹ There have been regular promises to look into the matter, but the task of clarifying the categories of the ‘established’ and ‘unestablished’ has repeatedly been deferred.

The problem first presented itself with a disproportionate growth in the number of unestablished academic-related staff. Between 2013–5 and 2021–2 unestablished academic staff numbers doubled from 167 to 301 while the number of established academic posts scarcely changed. For unestablished academic-related staff the figure for 2013–15 was 1,103, for 2021–2 it was 2,311.

An established post is normally a ‘University Office’. That carries both a significant advantage and a significant disadvantage for the post-holder. Cambridge’s Officers are protected by its Statute C which expressly guards their academic freedom and requires ‘justice and fairness’ in their treatment, as *Education Reform Act 1988* requires, A Schedule to Statute C preserves specifically for ‘academic’ staff many of the protections in the Model Statute which was framed by the Commissioners appointed under that Act.²

The disadvantage is that only Officers are subject to Cambridge’s Employer-Justified Retirement Age, while as a result of the 2011 *Repeal of Retirement Age Amendment* to the *Equality Act* of 2010 other employees of the University no longer have a ‘retirement age’. Special Ordinance C (ii) 12 requires University Officers to ‘vacate their offices not later than the end of the academic year in which they attain the age of sixty-seven years’.

A *Report* on this requirement was published on 15 May 2024,³ recommending that academic-related officers should no longer be subject to the EJRA and the age of retirement should be raised to 69. In a Notice in response to the ensuing Discussion called on it as a Topic of Concern, the Council noted:

*‘that there will be a separate review of established and unestablished posts in 2024–25 to consider, amongst other things, the position of academic-related University officers in relation to the Schedule to Statute C.’*⁴

This is the most recent of a series of so far unfulfilled promises to conduct such a review.

The recommendations of the *Report* were put to a vote by ballot in July, with an amendment adding ‘abolition’ of the EJRA to the options. Abolition of the EJRA was rejected but the other changes were approved bringing the forced retirement age for 69 for those to whom it still applied.⁵ This has had the effect of shrinking still further the category of University employees subject to forced retirement.

Academic-related staff: establishment and Office

The *Education Reform Act* s.203(4) provides that ‘academic staff’ include:

‘persons whose terms of appointment or contracts of employment are, in the opinion of the Commissioners, so similar to those of academic staff as to justify their being treated as academic staff for the purposes of this section’.

Cambridge’s senior professional and administrative staff are accordingly defined as ‘academic-related’.

The ‘established’ academic-related staff gained Offices with the creation, from the 1990s, of a Unified Administrative Service led by the Registrary. The first proposal was that the heads of UAS divisions should be Directors but not Officers. Objections were raised and responded to. A *Report* of 3 October 2001 proposed:

*‘that the offices of Director and Deputy Director in the Unified Administrative Service be established in the first instance by Ordinance in order that they come under the general regulations for established offices’.*⁶

This *Report* noted an initial concern about the relationship between established and unestablished appointments. ‘Terms of initial appointment and reappointment for all University officers’ were ‘being considered by the Personnel Committee’⁷ which will soon make proposals to the Council and the General Board’, it said, with ‘a Report proposing new arrangements’ to be ‘submitted to the Regent House during the present academical year’.⁸

Meanwhile a *Notice on University Governance* on 6 February 2002 launched a consultation. Among the proposals was that:

*‘Membership of the Regent House should be expanded to include all academic and academic-related staff who are employed on ‘unestablished contracts’, subject to reasonable provision for a qualifying period of service.’*⁹

Established academic posts are normally Offices. In 1995 a General Board Notice was published establishing a procedure for making appointments to unestablished posts ‘at Professorial level’.¹⁰ This was felt to be needed to cover certain special cases arising where the candidate had a claim to recognition as a Research Professor through a qualifying relationship with such a body as the Royal Society, Leverhulme Trust or the Medical Research Council. In each such instance these were to be assessed for a Cambridge Professorship by a committee appointed for the purpose.

A representation was made to the Vice-Chancellor under Statute K, 5 [now Statute A, IX, 1], that the General Board’s practice of making appointments to unestablished Research Professorships was in contravention of the University’s Statutes. A legal opinion was sought, which confirmed that the practice was ultra vires.¹¹ The General Board then published the Reports with Graces necessary to create the established posts for these appointments, but on a fixed-term basis. It remains the case that a:

‘competent authority may authorize the establishment of an office for a fixed term provided that there is objective justification for such authorization and shall decide what constitutes objective justification.’¹²

During the 1990s unestablished academic posts of University Lecturer had begun to be created, and also some unestablished posts described as ‘at the level of Professor or Reader’, though a General Board circular of 19 June 1998 limited these to five year appointments.¹³ In 1996 the General Board published a Notice on ‘Titles of unestablished appointments at the level of Reader’,¹⁴ with a further Notice in 1999 on the ‘Procedure for appointments to unestablished posts at the level of Professor or Reader’.¹⁵

However, promotion was available only for Officers, who, as established staff, might enjoy extended careers. By now controversy was afoot on the operation of the Senior Academic Promotions Procedure. Statute D, XIV [now Special Ordinance C(vii)] stated that:

‘No Professorship shall be established in the University except by Grace of the Regent House after publication of a Report of the General Board’.

For those successful in gaining a personal Professorship by Promotion a Grace is published and duly approved in the normal way.

The Board of Scrutiny expresses serial concerns

The Board of Scrutiny, established in 1995 to ‘ensure the accountability of the Council (and through it of the other central bodies) to the Regent House’,¹⁶ began to express concerns.¹⁷ In its 2015 Report it said it had:

‘observed that many of the new appointments in the UIS¹⁸ are to unestablished posts, removing them from the extra protections afforded to University officers by the Statutes and Ordinances. The Board is aware of other formerly established posts which have, upon being vacated, been filled on an unestablished basis.’

It therefore recommended:

‘that the University review its use of unestablished posts, and only appoint on an unestablished basis where there exists an objective justification for doing so.’¹⁹

In 2016 it reported that progress had been limited:

‘In response to our concerns regarding unestablished posts replacing those that were established, the Council advised the University that HR was working on the criteria for the appropriateness of making an unestablished as opposed to an established appointment.’

However, the Board had ‘now been advised that due to staff changes there has been little recent progress, but that matters will be addressed ‘in due course’.²⁰ The Human Resources Committee has made minimal or no response to this and other repeated requests.

Scrutiny returned to its concerns in its *Twenty-Third Report* in October 2018, including figures showing the dramatic growth in unestablished academic-related posts, and noting that, ‘since 2014–15 Heads of Schools have had delegated authority to create and fill unestablished, Chest-funded academic and academic-related posts’. However, it added, ‘the criteria on which a decision to change from established to unestablished (or *vice versa*) is made are not readily available.’ It foresaw ‘constitutional implications’ and also a risk of ‘discrimination claims if staff with similar duties have different terms and conditions’. Its recommendation, once more, was that ‘the Council should clarify the policy – and criteria – for the creation and filling of unestablished posts’.²¹

In March 2021 *The Council’s consultative report on Membership of the Regent House prepared by the Governance Review Working Group* ‘drew attention to the growth in the number of unestablished roles, particularly in academic-related positions’, leading to ‘a decline in the number holding established positions’:

‘There are numerous examples of individuals carrying out the same academic-related jobs side by side, one with the additional rights of an established office and the other without. There has also been a more modest, but still noteworthy, growth in unestablished academics, mainly those whose employment is funded by external research bodies.’²²

The Council recommended ‘that eligibility for Regent House membership be separated from established status’:

‘The distinction between established and unestablished roles could be set aside across the membership of the Regent House by the adoption of a simpler model based on grade.’

The boundary was set at Grade 9 and the distinction between established and unestablished posts became less sharp constitutionally speaking.²³

In its own Report of November 2021 the Board of Scrutiny reported that the Council had ‘declined’, to frame the requested review of established and unestablished posts on the grounds that this was a matter ‘for individual institutions to determine based on local circumstances’. However, the Council said it would ask ‘the Human Resources Committee to keep the matter under review’.²⁴

On 2 December (2021) the Human Resources Committee recorded the recommendation of the Board of Scrutiny ‘that the Committee devise a policy and criteria for determining whether a post should be established or unestablished and that such a policy be published.’ But given the complexity of the issues involved and the workload associated with existing projects in 2021–22, it agreed to start work on a review of established and unestablished status only in 2022–23. It did not do so.

In May 2023 it agreed ‘to pause’ the review’ scheduled to begin in Lent Term 2023 ‘for a period of one year’ until ‘the ongoing review of the Retirement Policy and Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA)’. The ‘review of established/unestablished contracts’, remained on hold pending the outcome of that review. That was deemed still to be the case in February 2024. No further consideration is recorded in the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee so far published.

Yet in its *Report* of October 2021, discussing a new Academic (Teaching & Scholarship) Pathway, the Board of Scrutiny had expressed concern that it ‘laid out a complete academic career path for the holders of unestablished posts’, and ‘meanwhile there have been numerous advertisements for vacant posts which were formerly filled as University offices’. It feared that ‘the unregulated proliferation of unestablished posts’ would lead to ‘casualisation’, ‘undermining the University office as the career path of staff delivering core teaching, research and professional services’. It recommended, ‘again, that the Human Resources Committee be instructed to devise a policy and criteria for determining whether a post should be established or unestablished and that such a policy be published’.²⁵

The Board of Scrutiny’s *Twenty-Seventh Report* noted that in its *Annual Report* (15 December, 2021) the Council had ‘reported that the HR Committee had launched a review of how the University manages its casual workers and uses fixed-term contracts’²⁶ and it welcomed ‘the Council’s acceptance of the recommendation in the Board’s *Twenty-Sixth Report* that the HR Committee be instructed to devise a policy and criteria for determining whether a post should be established or unestablished’.

The Board said it would ‘await the Committee’s conclusions with interest’, not least because in the last year the position had become more complicated with the launch of the Teaching and Scholarship Career Pathway which ‘made provision for such posts to be held on either an established or unestablished basis’:

‘In response to remarks made in the Discussion, the Council observed that ‘there may be good reasons of business efficiency’ for needing on occasion to appoint to unestablished academic Teaching and Scholarship roles. The Board awaits the HR Committee’s explanation of what such business reasons might be.’

The Board of Scrutiny tapped its foot once more in its *Twenty-Eighth Report* because of the ‘risk of the subsequent deliberations extending into 2024–25’. Scrutiny’s most recent *Report*, published in October 2023, had no better news, reporting that:

‘of the pressure of other work, including the EJRA, the Council put on hold the review of unestablished posts which it had previously agreed to launch in Lent 2023 in response to a recommendation of the Board’s 27th Report. The issues are interlinked.’

The EJRA has now had its *Report* and Discussion and ballot, so there seems no justification for still further postponement.²⁷

The constitutional implications and the risks

In 2018 Scrutiny pointed to ‘constitutional implications’ and also a risk of ‘discrimination claims if staff with similar duties have different terms and conditions’. It would be wise not to lose sight of these probable consequences of the continuing failure to address the continuing unresolved place of unestablished academic and academic-related posts in the University.

On the face of it Statute C, II is accommodating on the subject of Cambridge’s general employment practice:

‘1. Subject to the provisions of the Statutes and Ordinances regarding University officers, the University may engage persons for employment in the service of the University, may determine their salaries and pensions (if any), and may prescribe the conditions of their service. The University may delegate the exercise of any of these powers.

2. The competent authorities shall establish committees and processes for the management of employment by the University. Regulations for the establishment of such committees may be made by Ordinance.’

This has permitted a recognised uncertainty to be left unresolved despite repeated promises to map and address the difficulties.

It does not seem possible to make all academic, academic-related and research posts ‘established’ because of the additional financial burden of carrying their salaries that would place upon the University. To make existing Officers ‘unestablished’, stripping them of the protections of Statute C and its Schedule would involve potentially unacceptable changes to their terms and conditions. Nevertheless that option was hinted at by the Council in June this year.²⁸

1. There is a procedure for filling such a post, requiring departmental or institutional approval, <https://www.hrsystems.admin.cam.ac.uk/systems/systems-overview/recruitment-administration-system-ras>,

2. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/pdfs/2023/statutec.pdf>

3. Joint Report of the Council and the General Board on the University’s Retirement Policy and Employer Justified Retirement Age, <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6741/section3.shtml#heading2-8>

4. Reporter, 12 June, 2023, <https://www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6745/section1.shtml#heading2-6>

5. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6750/section7.shtml#heading2-23>

6. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2001-02/weekly/5856/33.html>

7. From 2000 this became the ‘Human Resources Committee’, www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/hr-services/human-resources-committee

8. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2001-02/weekly/5856/33.html>
9. <https://www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2001-02/weekly/5873/5.html>
10. *Reporter*, 5609, 1994-5, p.381.
11. *Reporter*, 21 March, 2001, <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2000-01/weekly/5842/7.html>.
12. *Ordinances*. p.673.
13. I am grateful to William Astle for this reference.
14. *Reporter*, 5655, 1995-6. p.512.
15. *Reporter*, 5773. 1998-9, p.587.
16. <https://www.scrutiny.cam.ac.uk/about>
17. Its Reports are listed at <https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/governance/key-bodies/Pages/scrutiny-annual-reports.aspx>
18. University Information Services, <https://www.uis.cam.ac.uk/>
19. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2015-16/weekly/6433/section7.shtml#heading2-38>
20. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2015-16/weekly/6433/section7.shtml#heading2-38>
21. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2018-19/weekly/6521/section6.shtml#heading2-11>
22. https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2020-21/weekly/6609/6609_public.pdf#page=3
23. https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2020-21/weekly/6609/6609_public.pdf#page=3
24. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2018-19/weekly/6528/section1.shtml#heading2-2>
25. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2021-22/weekly/6633/6633.pdf#page=9>
26. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2021-22/weekly/6641/6641.pdf#page=8>
27. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6714/section6.shtml#heading2-18>
28. *Reporter*, 12 June, 2023, <https://www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6745/section1.shtml#heading2-6>

An ordinary tree

(A work in progress)

I can take a picture and
post it on a screen but
no amount of pixels
can compare the
brush of glassy air, the
amber, green.

The painter's palette there,
free of the canvas, the
alchemy, of
light transubstantiating into
life.

This is how you and I
and everything
that moves and sings
eats and breathes.

It is not in the stars
that we are formed
but in the leaves.

Come and see
November's bow
summer's sigh,

forming soil
with a fall of crown jewels,
casually,
as if dropping gems
was quotidian.

Go out
in any kind of shiny-rainy weather,
alone or with me.
See in real light and real time,
the matchless miracle of a tree.

SASHA NORRIS

NOTE: Oaks lose their leaves later than all other trees and they grow later in spring too. By choice, all tawny owls would choose to nest in oak trees if enough old oaks were available. We often cut them down at the point they become useful to wildlife – when the trees are old and fungi start to form. This allows holes to form in the wood: homes for woodpecker and owls. Old trees are the very best for wildlife.

Sasha Norris holds a DPhil in Zoology and has recently completed an MSt in Creative Writing. She is the founder of Herefordshire Wildlife Rescue.

The *Oxford Magazine* is edited by

**Tim Horder
&
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Literary Editor:
Jane Griffiths at Wadham

Japan Twenty Years On

DAVID GELLNER

My family and I lived in Arakawa-ku, a working-class suburb of Tokyo (part of the old 'lower town', *shitamachi*), for the academic year 2003–04 while I was a visiting professor at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. We had not been back for 20 years. Would it feel any different after all this time?

Of course, there were some changes (which I'll come to), but the big 'take-home' is that Japan was already a prosperous and (relatively) egalitarian society in 2003 and it has seen no reason to transform itself in the two decades since. When you look out the window of the *shinkansen* (bullet train), the scenes of forested mountains and sizeable houses in the green and fertile flatlands below have not changed. The urban townscape, the streets, restaurants, shops, temples, and shrines, do not feel different. (Big caveat: we did not visit villages this time: there, I am told, the demographic decline and continued out-migration have made for more visible changes in the last two decades.) The Japanese Post Office has only just raised its prices for the first time in over thirty years. The rules and practices of deference and politeness are as pervasive as ever. The huge cultural changes that have happened in the UK in the last twenty years – the fact that a large proportion of the younger generation is vegetarian or vegan, for example – does not seem to have affected Japan. Food in Japan is only vegetarian in Buddhist temples or specifically Buddhist contexts (and there it is spectacular). Otherwise, omnivorous eating is the default assumption.

I had a bank account, untouched for twenty years, in the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi, which exists no more. With the help of a friend, I got an appointment to visit the nearest branch of the successor bank, MUFG. Amazingly, we were able to close the account, extract the £350-worth of yen still in it, plus 200 yen of interest (about £1) accumulated in 20 years, in about an hour. On the upside, there was no administration charge for looking after the account for all these years or for closing it.

Despite the strong impression of a society that doesn't want to change, and hasn't changed much in twenty years, there are of course some changes. Twenty years ago major public parks in Tokyo (Ueno Park, for instance) had numerous, substantial tents with solid frames and blue tarpaulin sheets in which homeless men (it was nearly always men) lived. Similar tents dotted the banks of the Sumida River (I remember seeing one which had not only a bicycle parked outside – that was quite common – but a set of golf clubs as well). Now these homeless tents have all gone. The men have either died, I was told, or been re-housed by a more vigorous local government policy and more generous welfare payments.

Japan has internationalized somewhat: twenty years ago signs on trains or on the underground were in Japanese and English only; now they are also in Chinese and Korean. Chinese and Korean tourists are now common and make a substantial contribution to the Japanese economy. They could be spotted, photographer in tow,

wearing kimonos in the Shinto shrine, Dazaifu, in Kyushu (the southern island of Japan), where my DPhil student, Guilherme, was doing anthropological fieldwork ('only tourists wear kimonos on ordinary days', we were told).

Another unexpected sign of internationalization is the sheer number of young Nepalis. Twenty years ago there may have been 1,000 Nepalis in the whole of Japan. Now they are said to number 200,000. Japan has become the number one destination for 'students' from Nepal. In one year, 2023–24, 34,731 Nepalis left on student visas for Japan; only 15,982 left for second-placed Canada and 14,372 for third-placed Australia.¹

Wherever we went – every convenience store, almost every restaurant, and in many shops – we ran into young Nepalis. (They are pervasive in the care sector also, apparently.) A foreigner speaking Nepali in Nepal is not uncommon and is only mildly interesting. In Japan, a very different context, a *gora* (white man) speaking Nepali, causes gasps of astonishment. Most of these young people come straight to Japan after their '+2' college degrees (equivalent to A levels). They sign on at 'business' colleges. They are allowed, by law, to work 28 hours a week; informal arrangements for extra hours are easy to come by. Of ten Nepalis I spoke to, 8 had been in Japan for between 1 and 4 years and all seemed comfortable speaking Japanese to customers. The other two were in a longer established Nepali restaurant in Tokyo and had been in Japan 7 years (a waiter) and 14 years (the owner). It is not only Nepalis, but they are one of the largest groups arriving on education visas as a way to solve the demographic crisis and Japan's lack of manpower in the healthcare and retail sectors. In general, and doubtless as a consequence of all this immigration, foreign food outlets are now more common (one evening we ate tacos and guacamole at a Peruvian restaurant in the backstreets of Roppongi).

One dramatic change is at the Fukagawa Fudo Shinon Buddhist temple, near Monzen Nakacho station in Tokyo. I made a small study of the temple in 1991. Today there is a huge new modernist wing, attached to the original temple, which still, incongruously, sits beneath a huge flyover. The new wing's box-like modernist architecture is covered in row upon row of Buddhist mantras in black Sanskrit lettering that only Buddhist priests can read. Inside, the five daily fire sacrifices, praying for world peace and benefits for all beings, have now become a spectator occasion, more spectacular than they were in 1991, with a section of seating set aside for foreign tourists (though without, as yet, any explanations in English). The drumming and chanting attract large numbers, far larger than used to be the case. Rituals for blessing and protecting new cars and vans (for which Fukagawa Fudo was and remains famous) seem to be just as popular as they ever were. So are the wooden boards (*ema*) on which people write their wishes for health, love, the safety of family members, or success in exams – and then leave them hanging in the temple. Alongside the evident success of this

Tantric Buddhist temple in expanding its operations and attracting increasing numbers of devotees, there's one more thing that evidently hasn't changed in Japan: widespread participation in religious events and rituals with no great emphasis on questions of doctrine or belief.

1. Sonia Awale 'Brain Gain into Brain Drain' (<https://nepalitimes.com/news/brain-gain-into-brain-drain>)

A Truism

So one door closes
as another opens
while between them both
a room lies empty.

Whoever lived there
has disappeared,
leaving no note
of explanation.

'It has ever been thus'
say the four walls,
all too familiar
with such departure.

Receding footsteps
echo along a corridor
as whoever it was this time
gives up the ghost.

Then one door opens
while another closes
and the same walls say
'We told you so.'

A Visitation

'What's this?' you ask,
holding up an item
taken from a table
as you wander curiously
about the house.

Caught by surprise
I know what it is
but can't remember
how it arrived
or why I placed it there

as for a moment
familiarity breeds
forgetfulness, then
overwhelmed by memory
and recognition

I find myself recalling
where and when
we bought it
and in an instant
realise who you are.

Thoughts about Thinking

*I don't know that I think less
but I think less of the thoughts that occur:*
Benjamin Haydon's journal entry,
first day of November, 1827,
age 41, finding those sudden
revelations, chance discoveries
that might have once been
primal, luminous, and thus
the making of his art, too commonplace
to work fresh magic, all of them
familiar as that same old world
recalled by Prospero but only
to instruct his daughter
—*'Tis new to thee*—
and fraught with a weariness
that weighs on the heart
unless the light breaks in

A note, then, to myself; don't let
the lone and level get you down
but catch the sparkle in each grain,
be absolute for life. Think less
of thinking, all that ground gone over,
rise above it. Consider poor Haydon,
twenty years on and bankrupt,
(*I declare I feel as young as ever*
six months before his death)
but then turn back the pages,
celebrate the proper hubris of an artist
starting out, spontaneous, rash,
never to betray those irresistible
perpetual urgings. *I have been a man
with air-balloons beneath his armpits
and ether in his soul.*

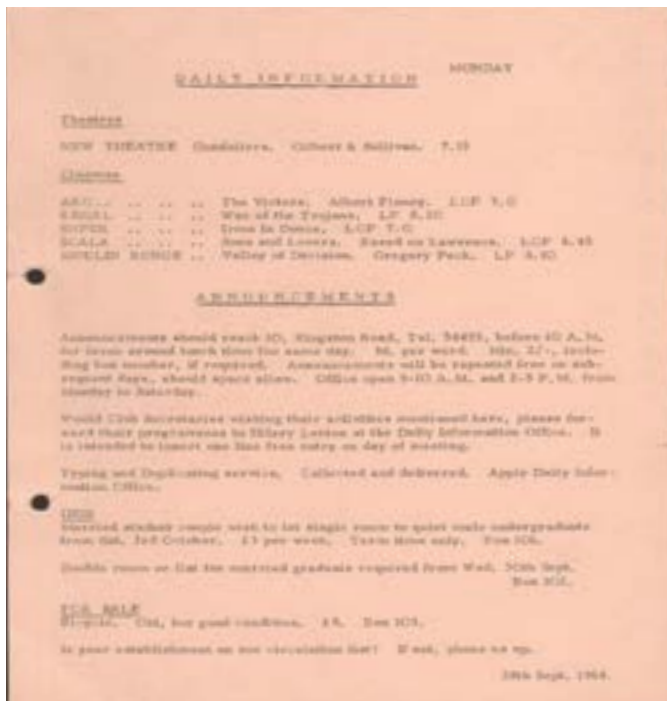
JOHN MOLE

John Mole lives in Hertfordshire where for many years he taught and ran The Mandeville Press with Peter Scupham. He has written poetry for children and adults, literary journalism, and plays regularly as a jazz clarinettist. His most recent collection is *Keeping in Step* (Shoestring Press, 2023).

60 years of Daily Info

MIRANDA ROSE

In the summer of 1964, my father, John Rose, tried to put an ad in a local paper. History does not record what his ad was for, but in his own words: “You couldn’t put it in by phone, so I went down to their office in New Inn Hall St on Thursday afternoon. It was shut, along with most other shops in Oxford – early closing day. Back again on Friday. ‘Could put it in on Monday afternoon, sir.’ Fat lot of use that was. And it was expensive.” Dad was a firm believer in the need to do yourself anything which you wish to be done properly. When the world disappointed him – as it often did – his reaction was forceful, immediate and occasionally disproportionate, steaming unstopably away in the direction of his ideal reality until he’d dragged circumstances into at least a minimally acceptable new shape. I have never met anyone who entertained less doubt about whether any given thing could be done – his only question, ever, was whether it ought to be done (his septuagenarian ventures into local politics are still remembered with mixed emotions by those who served on the City Council in the 1990s). In this instance, having to wait over the weekend to place an ad led to his founding a unique local paper which, on the 28th of September 2024, will have been in continuous publication for 60 years.



The first Daily Info sheet 28 Sept 1964

The very first sheets were typewritten on quarto paper (8 by 10 inches). The year they were first pinned up on college and civil noticeboards, the Kinks and Simon and Garfunkel released their debut albums. The Beatles were on *A Hard Day's Night*. Earlier that year, Nelson Mandela had just been jailed for life. It was two years ahead of the

first ever episode of Star Trek and five years before anyone walked on the moon. And here we are with *The Gondoliers* and a bike for sale, as if it might be yesterday. That's Oxford for you.

Within a year, the sheets had graduated to foolscap size (8 by 13 inches) and often consisted of two or three pages stapled together, always on the most eye-catchingly bright paper Dad could get his hands on (I remember some neon shades in the early 90s which we had to stop using because people said it was too painful to read).

The last sheet of term in 1965 records:

“BRIEF ANNUAL REPORT: DAILY INFORMATION lost £100 last Michaelmas term, £50 in Hilary term and just about broke even this term. We hope to clear the deficit during the coming year. Our grateful thanks are due to all those who have helped to run ‘The Sheet’ and especially those responsible for the reliability of its distribution in all weathers. The Organiser has awarded himself a pint of beer and is now off to drink it. Cheers!”

The office was open 9-10am and 2-3pm Monday to Saturday, but you phoned your ad in at any time to Henry, a state-of-the-art recording machine. Everything received before 10am would be delivered by bike “around lunch-time”. It is hard to imagine today how unusual this speed of communication was. It was a year ahead of the very earliest estimate of the invention of email, and 30 years away from widespread use of email, the internet, or personal phones. An ad from 1984 reads:

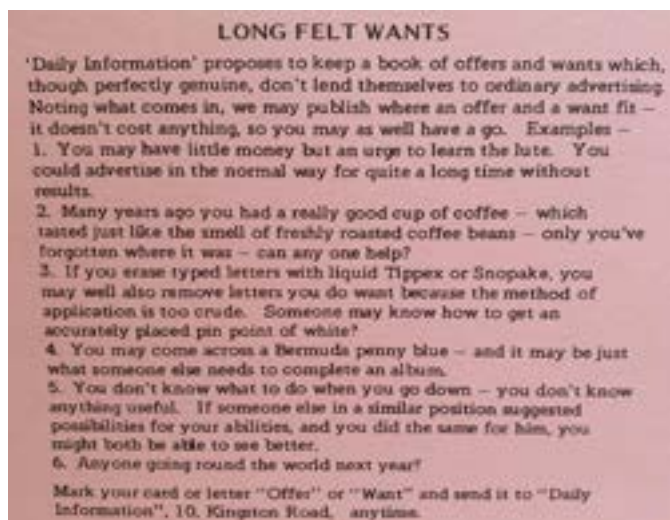
“Andy, Andy, Carol, Mike, Phil, Kev, Ian and Ezra (Univ) are having a party tonight (Friday) at 8.30pm. All their friends are invited. PBAB. If you know us, you’ll know where to go!”

Apart from radio – which would have been expensive and have needed booking in advance – there was literally no other medium available to spread a message that quickly.



Ad from April 1977

Similarly, in the days before email lists or personal phone numbers, Daily Info was the friend of organisers and choir directors trying to corral their troops, acting as a sort of prehistoric social media.



Prehistoric social media

Much less happened in Oxford during University vacations, so out of term we produced weekly rather than 6 days each week. In 1970, there was too much information for one sheet, so we started producing a monthly events guide, *What's On in Oxford*, sold through newsagents as personal copies rather than pinned up on noticeboards. There was a standing invitation to local artists to send in work which we would buy for the covers, many of which can be seen in the background decorating the printing shed.



Printing shed and staff: from left: Sue Roles, my parents John Rose and Jessica Beebe, Nicola Bourdillon and Liz James

By 1971 the sheets were A2 (four times A4 size) and being produced on an electronic composer in the basement at 31 Warnborough Road, photographed onto a plate in a cellar under the stairs ("The Dungeon") and printed in a shed in the back garden. I loved the printing shed. It smelt of warm cedar planks and dry paper, with a sharp acetone tang from the photographic plates, and the dieselly whiff of the thick sticky ink, tar black or blood red, which filled a narrow trough in the huge thundercloud-grey printing press. I was sternly adjured not to touch the printing press but I loved to watch the sheets piling down, as quick as a flipper book, into the cage at the bottom. It was something like having a tiger in your shed; a unique and fierce animal which responded unpredictably to its trainers. On one of its more temperamental days, a relay of staff and messengers had to turn the main cog

by hand to get the sheets through. It only once entirely let us down, in the early 90s, when we ended up folding all the unprinted A2 sheets in half and running them twice through our A3 photocopier. It took most of the night, but they were out on the right morning.



As well as the sheet and *What's Ons*, we produced an annual Oxford Guide of startling comprehensiveness, endless maps, useful lists of conferences and phone numbers, leaflets, an A3 fortnightly mini-sheet just for computer classifieds, and four kinds of calendar. These last were: standard, with drawings by Artist In Residence Mary Potter; wallet-sized ("can also function as ice cream scoop and electro-static crane for tiny pieces of paper"); an A2 poster (our famous Year Planner, still produced every September and available free from Daily Info), and termly (the Datesheet). It was busy at 31, with everything focused around the 5pm deadline when the messengers would turn up for their sheets. Even as a child I could sense the purposeful buzz that comes from a group of people focused together on a chaotic, frustrating but ultimately productive task which they know how to do better than anyone else. You get the same vibe sometimes from well-functioning academic teams or musicians. It is the thing I appreciated most when working there as a teen, and then later, after Dad died in 2004, when I ran the business as an adult. In Dad's day it was joked that the staff resigned every Friday and were re-hired every Monday. Or perhaps this was not entirely a joke. My mother noted on a staff outing to London Zoo how everyone automatically perceived the Zoo in terms of damage limitation:

"If the lion got out there, you could get behind that bench and I could use the bin as a weapon..."

Q: I called in Saturday lunchtime, and out of 6 people working in the office, not one could tell me what I wanted to know.

A: Quite possible – it happens very occasionally at off-peak times that we leave our customers in charge – only a very small proportion of the people you see beavering away at 'Daily Information' are actually employed here – you can usually tell those that are by their harassed look."

A readers question amply answered 23/4/81.

Just after I came along in 1981, Dad, an addict of expensive new technology, opened the Computer Department on the floor above Publications. For some years, the Word Processors Pip, Squeak and Wilfred had been available for public use (they were far too big to steal, so the door was left open 24/7 and midnight thesis-typers logged their own hours in an honesty book).



Typewriters ad

A sort of internet cafe without the internet, the Computer Department opened five years before anyone knew what a computer was and closed five years after everyone had their own, but for ten years in the middle it made a reasonable profit (which Dad immediately ploughed back into whatever shiny new device had caught his eye). I still meet people in Oxford who learned as teens to type there, as I did, using Mavis Beacon, or played King's Quest or Lemmings at the Computer Club.

Dad was a great advocate of the new and exciting abilities the machines had to store data electronically rather than relying on old-fashioned paper records. On one disastrous occasion I remember a customer's entire PhD was lost when a disk fried itself – but after heroic efforts, the text was recovered. With no spaces between any of the words.

WHAT A GOOD WORD PROCESSOR WILL DO – THAT A GOOD TYPEWRITER WON'T (A good word processor is just a typewriter with a screen and a memory).

1. You can turn your rough draft into the final copy without having to retype any of the good bits – and if the good bits would then be in the wrong place, the processor can insert them wherever you wish.
2. You can see what you are doing on the screen – a whole page at a time.
3. You can recall any other page to the screen by pressing a button.
4. It can sort your random lists or statistics into up to 9 different orders of priority. We ask it just to arrange the 'Daily Information' meetings column in date order and alphabetically within each of those dates.
5. It will select from lists, omitting those items you don't want at the time.
6. It can scan what you have typed and make an index for you.
7. You can do all your text first and all your diagrams together later, knowing they can be easily fitted in where you wish. Diagram size is easily altered. The same applies to quotes or different languages.
8. And it prints out an A4 page in 30 seconds.

COME & TRY IT – we have some 'Idiot notes' which make it easy to operate and there's no charge for learning (allow a morning or an afternoon). Productive work is charged at 50p/hour at the moment – the same as 'Daily Information' IBM easy-correction golfball typewriters. We don't know anywhere else you can use such a machine just for the particular job you require at the time. Unless you buy one for yourself – only £10,000. We suggest you use ours before you decide.

Phone 53377. Daily Information, 10 Kingston Rd, Oxford.

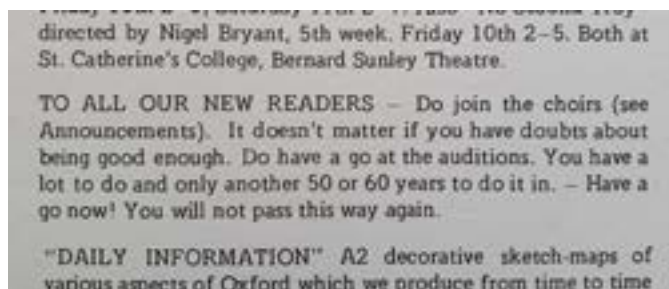
RESEARCH WORKERS find it much quicker and probably more accurate since there is no hassle over corrections.

RICH RESEARCH WORKERS who send their secretaries find it cheaper as well.

AUTHORS, BUSINESS MEN & SOLICITORS find they can produce 2 or 3 versions of the same work different in size or content with minimal extra trouble

Ad for our word processors from 1979

Dad's enthusiasm for new tech led to our having one of the first websites in Oxford (after a few years of a dial-up bulletin board – does anyone remember those?). That finally let him fulfil his dream of really *instant* advertising. No sooner was an ad submitted than it was available online – the checks and corrections requiring a significant change of routine for the staff, who nevertheless also kept the printed sheet going. Like anyone whose family has ever owned a small business, I've always been convinced Daily Info is about to vanish in a puff of smoke, but the website has thrived, growing with the internet and holding its own against such upstart newcomers as Gumtree, Indeed and Facebook Marketplace. Like the sheets, the website is more than a platform for classified ads and event listings – freed from the constraints of print, it is a fountain of opinions and guidance on Oxford life, the university and everything from allotments to zumba, and retains the practical if irreverent voice in which I enjoy hearing echoes of Dad's approach to life.



Editorial Message from October 1975

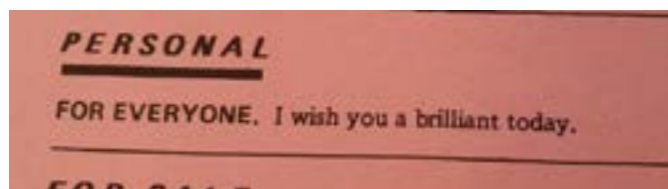
When Dad got ill at Easter 2004, I took a year out of University to spend time with him. He died at Christmas, and I decided to use the rest of the year to see if I could help to give the business a new confidence to replace that which he took with him. By the time I should have gone back to my degree, I was far too interested in running Daily Info to stop. Ten years later, in new premises above BetFred on the Cowley Road, I handed the business on to our current directors Susie Cogan and Jen Pawsey, under whose leadership it has continued to flourish.

In 60 years the only thing that halted our continuous paper publication was Covid-19. The last sheet before lockdown went out as usual. And Daily Info continued its work as an online resource. When the world restarted, we moved to quarterly publication of the sheet – hardly “daily”, admittedly, but ads and events listings can still be placed instantly and free at dailyinfo.co.uk (and you have no idea what it saves on our overhead). Unlike many small companies, I think we can say Daily Info has survived the pandemic: current staff Russ, Sophia, Niamh and Richard operate a slimmed-down operation now housed at the Old Music Hall on the Cowley Road: the office banter now operates over Slack since Kids These Days WFH, and

the atmosphere, I gather, is as silly and as productive as it ever was.

The community of people who have contributed to Daily Info over the years – staff, customers and interested by-standers – is an extraordinary one. I have made some of my truest friendships and best memories through it. Personally, I am currently engaged in sorting through the 26,000 pieces of paper that form what is laughably called our “archive”, in order to make a master file of the 7000 or so sheets in date order. These are to be scanned into an online collection and donated to the Oxford History Centre, where they will be available on request to researchers. A few highlights are about to be available as part of an online exhibition at the Museum of Oxford; worth a look if you’d like to visit the days when you could see David Bowie live for 65p or when mangos were sufficiently exotic to be advertised as a draw to Wadham commem.

Sorting Out The Archive is a project one of our directors once described to me, with her usual inimitable insight, as “serving myself a great big nostalgia sandwich”. Well, yes, but it is a stock-take of my own history as well as the history of a unique Oxfordshire institution. I am proud to have been a part of it. I hope Daily Info will continue for as long as possible: perhaps even another 60 years? Meanwhile, I leave you with an anonymous ad from 28th February 1973:



Personals ad from 1973.

NOTICE

The Editors of the *Oxford Magazine* regret that they cannot publish any material submitted to them anonymously. If the author requests publication on the basis that the author’s name and university address be withheld from the readership, the Editors will consider the reasons given and in their discretion may publish on that basis; otherwise the material will be returned to the author.

The editors invite and welcome contributions from all our readers.
The content of Oxford Magazine relies largely on what arrives spontaneously on the editors’ desk and is usually published as received.

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REVIEWS

An Old Classic for a Modern World



CARMEN, Glyndebourne, 15 August 2024

Whilst the weather at Glyndebourne may have been unpredictable, picnic impacted by unexpected torrential shower during the long interval(!), there is altogether more certainty in what to expect from the opera: a great story and tremendous music (the tunes stick in the mind for days afterwards!), albeit with curiosity about how the director would tackle a much loved and much performed work. Director Diane Paulus was clear in her notes that she sees Carmen as a strong woman in a man's world, and noted that the hijab protests in Iran were taking place at the time she was considering the production's design. She went on; "the purpose of telling the story is to hold a mirror up to our world and say, yes its 2024 and we've had evolution and change and yet this phenomenon of violence against women still continues".

Bizet's "*Carmen*" was first performed in Paris in 1875, but it was not a success in his lifetime (he died, aged 36, three months later of a heart attack during a performance of "*Carmen*"), with the themes of sexual freedom, murder and common people not to the taste of contemporary audiences. Since then it has become one of the most performed pieces in the operatic repertoire. The story is of a young attractive factory worker, Carmen, who avoids arrest for causing a fight by making eyes at the soldier, Don Jose, sent to bring her in. Despite having a loyal but plain girlfriend, he falls for her exotic charms and lets her escape, for which he goes to prison. On his release, Carmen meets him to deliver on her half of the bargain, but circumstances force him to choose between Carmen and returning to his regiment. He opts for the former, but Carmen soon gets bored with him and falls for the cocksure matador, Escamillo. Don Jose leaves the gypsy band to visit his dying mother. On the day of the bullfight Escamillo arrives with Carmen on his arm. Despite an ominous fortune telling and warnings from her friends Mercedes and Frasquita that Don Jose is in town, Carmen meets him and her destiny. On being told that their relationship is over and she will live or die free, Don Jose kills her.

The setting is modern, and for me, worked surprisingly well. The soldiers wear combat fatigues, the gypsy camp resembles a refugee camp, the bar looks like a contemporary club. At the club Carmen wears denim shorts, at the factory she

wears jeans, a loose fitting white blouse and a black bra. The women coming out of the factory get touched up and leered at by the squaddies, the modern dress conveying the director's message that this type of behaviour still occurs. Micaela, Don Jose's faithful girlfriend, is dressed much more soberly, and however sensible what she says may be, we think differently of her as a result. One of our party lamented the absence of traditional flamenco costumes and dancing, but I think that would have been out of keeping with Paulus' slant.

I loved Aigul Akhmetshina's Carmen! I liked her voice, but the characterisation was probably the best Carmen I have seen: the way she rolled her hips whilst walking, the way she held herself when responding to the soldiers' wisecracks, the way she appeals to Don Jose, her fascination with someone new, the toreador, and that independence of spirit with which she makes her decisions, even knowing the consequences. Vivacious, she oozed sex appeal and we are meant to see her as a strong woman. I recall a competently sung Carmen several years ago where the title character manifestly lacked the personality to explain why men would fall at her feet, which had a disproportionately negative impact on one's feelings about the performance as whole.

American tenor Evan LeRoy Johnson gave a good impression of the slightly dull Don Jose who is bewitched by Carmen, but I preferred Lukasz Golinski's Escamillo, where he displayed all of the arrogance and self confidence of the bull fighter. Soprano Janai Brugger's Micaela drew many favourable comments from those around me, and had significant applause at final curtain. The fortune telling scene with Carmen, Mercedes and Frasquita (Kazia Bienek and Elisabeth Boudrault) left a very favourable impression. The chorus was excellent, whether it was the factory girls, the boorish soldiers or the members of the camp, and they provided plenty of movement and interest on stage. (I should add for anyone confused by the cast that there was a different cast, including conductor, for the May-June productions compared to those in August).

Conductor Anja Bihlmaier was making her Glyndebourne debut. She is the Chief Conductor of the Residentie Orkest in the Hague. Slight, energetic and enthusiastic, she threw herself in to the music such that at times one worried whether she would stay on the rostrum! She had good control over the orchestra (London Philharmonic Orchestra) and kept up a good pace without losing the necessary balance between orchestra and singers.

This was a great performance. My favourite parts (the prelude, Carmen's

"l'amour est un oiseau rebelle" and the Song of the Toreador) were all executed as I would wish. Aigul Akhmetshina was excellent as Carmen and I liked the modern setting: as the director intended, it underlined how Carmen still has something to say to us today.

* * *

A Matter of Taste



TRISTAN UND ISOLDE, Glyndebourne, 25 August 2024

This was the last performance of the season at an uncharacteristically cold Glyndebourne. One of our party had been looking forward to the English horn solo in the opening bars from the moment the programme was announced, whereas I see Wagner as an acquired taste, one which I never did... I have heard it said that it is important to listen to Wagner the musician rather than Wagner the man, and I note that "*Tristan*" was not performed at Glyndebourne until the twenty first century.

"*Tristan*" was first performed in Munich in 1865, although Wagner finished writing it in 1859, the year of Darwin's "*Origin of the Species*". Both works challenge the established way of thinking about things. The programme notes for Nikolaus Lehnhoff's production warn us that "little happens but much is said" and also talks of "the opera's illogical and tangential philosophising". The basic plot is that Tristan has killed Isolde's fiancé but is wounded in the fight and cured by Isolde. He later returns to Ireland to escort Isolde to Cornwall but ignores her during the voyage as she is to be married to King Marke, whom she has never met. Whilst on the boat Isolde plans to kill Tristan and herself by drinking poison. However, her maid, Brangane, substitutes a love potion, so that they fall deeply in love. The lovers meet at night, talking of the ecstasy of love and the desire to be permanently united in death. However, King Marke then arrives as the lovers have been betrayed by Melot, a member of the court, who fights and wounds the 'treacherous' Tristan. Tristan's servant brings him back to his homeland, where he is dying from his wounds. He dreams of Isolde coming to heal him again, and eventually her ship does appear, but he dies in Isolde's arms, whereupon she expires "in the highest bliss of unending love".

"*Tristan*" is a real test of stamina for the two title characters (Miina-Liisa Varela's Isolde and Stuart Skelton's Tristan) as they are left to sing centre stage for much of the

four hour performance, with very little action or chorus to give them a break. With this they coped admirably, although I was left unconvinced that there was any particular chemistry between the two lovers. My wife, as ever more charitable, ventured that they could not possibly gaze in to each others' eyes for the duration of the opera, and she makes a fair point. I preferred the warm timbre of Karen Cargill's Brangane to Isolde, however accomplished the latter was, and I also enjoyed bass Franz-Josef Selig's King Marke. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Isolde is a strong female role, and this was conveyed effectively.

The director's notes were helpful, starting with the title *'Dying to Live'* which neatly summarises the bizarre premise underlying the work. Lehnhoff then explains the importance of light in the piece and how the set was carefully designed, with its series of black stepped ellipses which were "at

once a womb and a cage, enclosing and imprisoning the lovers". The costumes were black and grey, so if one were being very harsh one might say there were dark characters on a dark set with very little action or movement. It didn't work for me.

One of our party said she "shut her eyes and listened to the music" and I can understand this, as Robin Ticciati's orchestra (London Philharmonic Orchestra) was the real star of the show. Ticciati's ability to coax the requisite amount of force or restraint out of the orchestra is key to his success. His energy and enthusiasm conducting makes it easy to forget that he has been Music Director of the Glyndebourne Festival since 2014. Listening to Wagner, one is constantly listening out for the different motifs, the pastoral tones of the English horn (played from up in the gods, with no spotlight on the player: it was both haunting and effective) and the cheerier

tune when Isolde's ship is seen arriving. The music will live in the memory rather longer than the set.

This was not an opera for me. I could admire the vocal range and stamina of the two leads without warming to them, the 'united by undying love in death' underlying the story I found improbable and distasteful, and whilst I appreciated the Director's explanation of what he was striving to achieve with the set and lighting, it was nevertheless extremely dark. Having said which, I am not a Wagner aficionado, and speaking at Lords to someone who was (member of the Wagnerian Society) the reaction was totally different. They loved the intensity and purity of feeling, the emotional range conveyed by the music and considered the production a triumph. It would be a poorer world if we all enjoyed the same things.

T.J.N. WICKENS

Do Oxford academics consider themselves to be lazy?

Sir – I have yet to meet one who says so. Hence to find one who writes so was unexpected. The context is 'scholarly', it is an aside in a longish editorial introduction (1968) to a 19th century novel, Thackeray's *'Vanity Fair'*.

'It is not perhaps strictly true that the history of the technique of English fiction is the history of the novelist's financial circumstance. But 'Vanity Fair' would not be quite as it is but for that monthly £60. This is a kind of literary fact not always clear to scholars, to whom some monthly sum commonly awaits, regardless as to whether they have passed the preceding thirty days productively or in contemplation.'

The relevant Editor (a 'Student' of Christchurch) would be hard to view as an 'unproductive' scholar. But he was a close observer of the dons, his Oxford colleagues. J.I.M. Stewart describes them in some 50 novels authored under the pen-name, Michael Innes. Might he have considered 'contemplation' on its own insufficient justification for High Table?

Yours sincerely
RICHARD BOYD
Brasenose College

Wishlist for the Chancellor

Sir – In *OU Gazette* No.5430 dated 26 September 2024 the University's central

administrators issue, on p.7, their three requirements for the University's next Chancellor, as follows:

1. outstanding achievements in their field and the ability to command respect beyond it.
2. a deep appreciation for the University's research and academic mission, its global community and its ambition to remain a world-class research and teaching university.
3. the ability and willingness to enhance the reputation of the University locally, nationally and abroad."

This is fascinating. This plainly announces, by analogy with the treatment of academic postholders, a special form of "performance management" of the future Chancellor. Item 3 in particular implies – indeed, it expressly says – that the University's reputation could do with some enhancing. It most certainly could. There is clear evidence, widely noted in the press, that it has begun to diminish, on both material and intellectual grounds: resources being squandered, undergraduates forced into debt and the quality of taught degrees lowered.

Still more fascinating, on the preceding pages 4-5 of the very same *OU Gazette* are the names of 105 persons newly admitted in the past few months to the University's constitutionally sovereign body of Congregation. Of these 105, as many as 28 (i.e. more than one-quarter) are apparently not in academic posts but are senior-ranking administrative staff. This reflects the balance of influence in University policy making. Congregation itself is seldom activated. Regular meetings of the University's executive Council are also infrequent – just twice a term – and basically rubber-stamp measures laid before them by the central administration.

The increasingly ultra-centralised, undemocratic, top-down executive structure was bequeathed to the University by the North Commission of the later 1990s. For the past twenty-five years individual departments and faculties have had no significant voice either in the "performance management" of their own staff or in the University's broader policy-making. If the new Chancellor accepts a serious measure of responsibility for salvaging, or safeguarding, Oxford's academic quality and reputation, she/he will find it necessary to order a thoroughgoing reconsideration of its existing governance arrangements in the light of historical experience and institutional honesty.

Yours sincerely
PETER OPPENHEIMER
Christ Church

The next issue of Oxford Magazine will appear in second week

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NOTICE

Jane Griffiths, literary editor of the *Oxford Magazine*, will be pleased to read literary submissions of any description—e.g. verse, critical prose, very short stories, segments of dialogue, reviews of new dramatic productions and books, etc. Submissions should be no longer than 750 words, and where possible should be sent by email attachment to jane.griffiths@ell.ox.ac.uk together with a two-sentence biog.

Not the Gazette

N.B. The *Oxford Magazine* is not an official publication of the University. It is a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University.

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